

BRIEFING PAPER FOR THE PRESIDENT'S PRESS CONFERENCE
 November 20, 1962

SUBJECT: Soviet Ground Forces in Cuba

QUESTION: Can you tell us anything about the formations of Soviet troops which are reported to be staying in Cuba and forming up into military units? Have we requested the Soviets to remove these troops?

CURRENT SITUATION REPORT:

The responsible press has reported up to 3,000 Soviet military technical personnel in Cuba.

The published correspondence between you and Chairman Khrushchev makes no reference to either the presence or the ultimate disposition of these Soviet military personnel in Cuba.

As background for your press conference there follows a summary of the evidence available on Soviet military forces in Cuba:

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There appear to be between 9 - 16,000 Soviet troops in Cuba; 3 - 6,000 connected with SAM sites; 6 - 10,000 in the four combat groups located at Holguin, Remedios, Santiago de Cuba, Vinales and Artemisa. There is also what appears to be a large military installation, possibly a headquarters at the Barrios reformatory near Havana.

The four combat groups, one of which appears to be an elite Soviet Guards Unit, are of reduced regimental size. They are equipped with T-54 tanks, 100 mm assault guns, FKO rockets (nuclear-capable rockets of the Honest John type) anti-tank missiles and mortars. Except for the absence of fixed artillery, these formations resemble in some respects a Soviet motorized rifle division operating as four independent combat commands with attached support elements.

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SUGGESTED POINTS IN REPLY:

Our aerial reconnaissance has proved its value by uncovering the presence of some additional Soviet troops in recent days, and by giving an additional indication about the type of these troops.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/UDC/MR

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Forces of this size are no threat to the United States, and we will not permit them to become a threat to other countries in the Hemisphere.

As Soviet weapons systems leave Cuba, there would appear to be no reason for the presence of such forces in Cuba, especially if there is no intention to reintroduce them. This fact has been brought to the attention of the Soviet authorities.

ABA/P:JFKing:LMGreensp:tab

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ABA - Mr. Martin

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